

Lake working to maintain required services

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Lake County Commissioners Raymond E. Sines and Daniel P. Troy spoke to the Willoughby Area Chamber of Commerce on Thursday to discuss how planning and administration of policies affect residents and business owners.

The commissioners were the featured speakers during the chamber's event at the Patrician Party Center in Eastlake.

Sines said the current economic climate has been difficult for individuals, families and businesses.

"This economy is at best stagnant," he said. "As you look at your bottom line obviously you have to do business different than in the past.

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Commissioners Troy and Sines speak at the event.

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"It's the same way with the county. One fortunate thing is we look at operating the county as a business, similar to what you do every day."

Sines said commissioners and the county have to do things differently because the revenues aren't the same and they haven't been for a while.

"We used to have investment income at \$7 million to 8 million per year, now it's less than \$1 million," he said. "You're

looking at \$7 million to come from somewhere else to provide the services."

Sales tax revenues remain flat, Sines said, but they have risen somewhat during the past few months by 3 percent to 4 percent when compared with the same months in 2010.

"In this environment in the county, it's probably the one optimistic sign," he said.

Compounding the challenge for county government is the state is changing the way it funds local governments, Sines said.

The commissioner said the county has had layoffs, but not as many as neighboring counties.

Troy said the county is working hard to continue to provide statutory responsibilities that are required by the state.

"We're taking a hard look at things we're not required to take care of, such as road patrol in the unincorporated areas of the county and talking about the shifting of responsibility to the people who live in those unincorporated areas who receive those services," Troy said. "We're still trying to make it fit and do the things we have to do that are required by state law."

Lake County has a good reputation of operating without many major problems, he said.

"The state of the county is to continue to do the things that we're required to do," Troy said.

"We don't have the ethical problems of our neighbors to the west and we don't have the fiscal problems that our neighbors to the east have had."